

**LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**(LED)**

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)**  
**FOR**  
**INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**REPRESENTATION**

**April 26, 2021**

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# **1 GENERAL INFORMATION**

## **1.1 Purpose of RFQ**

Louisiana Economic Development (LED) is seeking to obtain the services of a qualified international firm or consultant to represent the State of Louisiana's international economic development interests. Specifically, LED's Office of International Commerce (OIC) is seeking to identify and attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by establishing a digital platform of virtual meetings that lead to the facilitation of face-to-face site visits mobilizing FDI in Louisiana.

Funding for this project is provided through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Projects under EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance must, among other things, explain clearly how the proposed project would "prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus" or respond to "economic injury as a result of coronavirus." With the support of the U.S. Economic Development Administration through the CARES Act funding, LED will build a program of work leveraged on partnerships and collaboration designed to restore and augment economic growth.

## **1.2 Louisiana Economic Development Overview and Scope of Services**

LED is the Louisiana state agency for economic development, responsible for strengthening the state's business environment and creating a more vibrant Louisiana economy. LED's Office of International Commerce (OIC) leads the State of Louisiana's efforts with attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) into Louisiana across a number of international markets and industries. Louisiana has attracted more foreign direct investment per capita than any other state since 2008. Our FDI initiatives are focused on increasing trade volumes and expanding manufacturing activity within the state.

Despite navigating a sluggish COVID-19 economy, LED's OIC staff continues to actively target potential investment from a host of countries and sectors. Due to social distancing and travel restrictions, both internationally and domestically, LED's OIC staff has found themselves grounded and nearly cut-off from traditional lead generation activities. Typically, OIC staff will travel overseas to prospective countries to meet with industry, dignitaries, government leaders, and other essential personnel to establish and maintain connections with companies and trading relationships. Other efforts include participation in international trade shows to support Louisiana's small businesses participating in the Small Business Administration's State Trade Expansion Program (STEP), which assists small business with export development and export sales.

LED must evolve and adjust to the physical barriers created by COVID-19 and has received a technical assistance investment from EDA to establish a digital platform in its continued efforts as a leader in foreign direct investment. While the state continues to actively target FDI, also our lead generation activities are restricted significantly due to adherence to COVID-19 travel restrictions in place. LED is seeking to identify and attract foreign direct investment by establishing a digital platform of virtual meetings that lead to the facilitation of face-to-face site visits mobilizing FDI in Louisiana.

In order to meet this objective, LED will work with a competitively selected lead-generation firm with extensive international expertise and capacity to inform the necessary remote-oriented, digital platform development and deployment. Among the international investment efforts and working with our regional partners, we will be recruiting and reshoring new/expansion FDI, business-to-business opportunities, as a pandemic of this nature with its global and financial implications, will require us to be more tactical than previously.

Prior to COVID-19, in 2019, Louisiana had 83 project wins worth \$8.45 billion in capital investment, with 12,331 new jobs and 15,581 total jobs. Compared with two years earlier, this put Louisiana's economic development project wins up 84 percent, capital investment was up 82 percent, and retained jobs up 95 percent. At the close of 2019, unemployment was 4.9%.

LED's International Commerce Master Plan lays out the strategies to be employed by the OIC to strengthen Louisiana's position internationally:

- **FDI:** Focusing lead-generation efforts on key markets in Europe and Asia with the greatest potential for outward FDI and job creation;
- **Bulk Trade:** Strengthening existing trade ties to select countries in Asia and Latin America to increase bulk trade;
- **Reshoring:** Taking advantage of Louisiana's logistical assets, proximity to markets, cost and productivity advantages, and emerging international trends to spur companies to reconsider the drivers affecting their operating location decisions (2,500 jobs per year).

The Master Plan also identifies strategically-important industries that, by building on Louisiana's existing competencies and clusters, should be prioritized and targeted internationally, including:

- Heavy Manufacturing (Automotive, Steel and Other Metals, Industrial Machinery);
- Light Manufacturing (Rubber Products, Plastics, Consumer Durables, etc.);
- Process Industries (Oil and Gas, Chemicals);
- Technology Services (Software, IT, Telecom, and Business Process Outsourcing).

#### **Profile of Ideal FDI Client for LED**

- Companies with \$15 Million to \$1 Billion in sales. Mid-tier companies that LED cannot physically meet from the USA and their decision makers are based in host country;
- Louisiana's targeted industries include aerospace, agribusiness, automotive, energy, manufacturing, process industries, software development, and water management;
- Type of facilities targeted include manufacturing, assembly, distribution, headquarters, IT, service providers, and Research & Development. *Projects should have the potential to create at least 50 quality jobs in Louisiana;*
- Type of facilities especially desired include value-added manufacturing.

Technical assistance, digital services, such as virtual meetings and site visits, will provide the flexibility for both the State of Louisiana to orient, educate, and network with international investors and industries. "Digital onboarding" limits physical interaction, minimizes the need for extensive travel visits and face-to-face meetings and allows for the necessary physically distancing, while our country's health researchers continue to seek identification of effective medical treatment/vaccines. The technology put in place will enable LED to maintain its international presence and ability to provide services digitally across borders while engaged in responsive measures throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

This project is divided into two distinct phases: 1. Six months to create a digital platform which will lead to analysis of industry trends, identification of potential investors and benchmarking location competitiveness; 2. Twenty-four (24) months to carry out virtual meetings and site visits leading to 24 site visits generating in-person investment missions, securing foreign direct investment in Louisiana.

#### **1.3 Required Qualifications**

OIC is seeking to obtain the technical assistance and services of a qualified firm or consultant located internationally (on a part-time basis – approximately 40 hours or one working week per month) to represent the State of Louisiana's international economic development interests,

specifically identifying and attracting qualified investors from overseas to locate in the State of Louisiana. The potential Representative must have an extensive network of personnel based internationally, have significant ties to the international business community in key markets, and have previous experience in representing economic development organizations internationally.

The participating organization (Responder or potential Representative) must demonstrate that it is qualified and experienced in digital platforms, such as virtual meetings and site visits, which will provide the flexibility for both the State of Louisiana to orient, educate, and network with international investors and industries. The responding firm should describe its qualifications and experiences relevant to the project, including how or in what manner they were obtained and utilized. The organization must demonstrate that it is adequately staffed and performing at capacity. Responder should provide its organization's number of employees and their special qualifications, experiences, responsibilities, and achievements, if any; including, but not limited to working with others in dealing with the impact of COVID-19 and the pandemic created thereby; and/or in connection with economic and business development and expansion activities.

International Representative activities include:

- Outreach in the local language to companies identified by LED as potential leads to garner interest in investing in the State of Louisiana;
- Alerting OIC of additional potential investors;
- Fielding initial inquiries from companies in the local language;
- Providing information on Louisiana's business and financial incentives;
- Conducting basic due diligence on potential leads;
- Once qualified, introducing companies to appropriate OIC liaison with a summary of contact/exchanges thus far for follow up (typically at the 'fully engaged' stage);
- Advising OIC liaison on target industry trade shows and advertising opportunities.

The Responder or potential Representative agrees to abide by all policies, procedures, and guidelines of the Department of Economic Development and the State of Louisiana, including but not limited to abiding by ethics policies and procedures as well as keeping client information confidential.

## **2 Expectations of International Representatives**

### **2.1 General Expectations**

- Representative shall perform services in a professional manner and to the satisfaction of LED.
- Representative is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the services with or without the assistance or presence of LED staff.
- Representative shall work with his/her/its assigned OIC Liaison.
- Outstanding customer service is required.

### **2.2 Measurement**

- All measurement of client interaction and in-country contacts generated on behalf of LED must be accurately entered into Salesforce, or any other database(s) designated by LED, within five business days of client interaction. The Representative's performance is measured on the information that is recorded in this database. If it is not recorded correctly in the database, it will not count.

### **2.3 Information Requests**

- VIP requests are those received from the Secretary, Governor's office, LaBIC (Louisiana Board of International Commerce). OIC staff and Representatives receiving requests from VIPs should notify the Executive Director, OIC and keep him/her in the loop about the request/response.
- OIC staff and Representatives are not permitted to provide comments to the press; all press inquiries should be forwarded to LED's Communications team with copies to the Executive Director, OIC.
- Representative is expected to acknowledge requests within two (2) business days and provide specific timeline regarding when the request is handled.
- If Representative is contacted directly by an external organization or by any part of LED other than the OIC, Representative must refer the request to his/her/its assigned OIC Liaison. This should be done before committing to the work requested.
- Representative should regularly communicate with the OIC Liaison about projects and workload, should copy the assigned OIC Liaison on client and non-client correspondence, and document assistance in Salesforce.

### **2.4 Marketing**

- All materials created for LED must be approved by the OIC before being disseminated.
- All materials must be branded according to LED brand standards.
- Representative must use the assigned @la.gov email address in carrying out the official duties in the contract.
- Representative may be asked to review and edit country-specific information created by LED, including minor translations.
- For general documents about Louisiana, Representative may access LED's Marketing Resource database.
- To request customized marketing resources, Representative should contact their OIC liaison.
- Representative is not permitted to list their company name or otherwise market their company/products in LED or Louisiana-based materials.

### **2.5 Availability**

- Representative should have the capability for remote email and phone access throughout the business day especially when away from the office, via cell phone and Wi-Fi enabled devices.
- Subject to prior request, Representative must be available to be contacted as needed during the Department's working day (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. CST/CDT).

### **2.6 Outsourced Vendors**

- LED reserves the right to approve any outsourced vendor that the Representative chooses to use in order to execute the requirements of this project/contract. LED is not liable for payment to this vendor. All said payment is the responsibility of the Representative. Also, the Representative must work with and fully cooperate with any in-country/region vendor that may be hired by LED.

### **2.7 Potential Conflict of Interest / Ethics**

- Representative is required to advise LED if Representative currently represents or proposes to represent another economic development agency. LED reserves the right to terminate its contract with the Representative if LED determines that the representation of an additional economic development agency is a conflict of interest for Louisiana.

- Representative agrees to abide by all policies, procedures, and guidelines of Louisiana Economic Development and the State of Louisiana, including but not limited to abiding by ethics policies and procedures as well as keeping client information confidential.
- Representative, his/her/its employees, sub candidates and all third parties hired by the Representative must abide by The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act [15 U.S.C. § 78dd-1, 15 U.S.C. §§ 78m (b)(2)(A) and (B) of 1977 (FCPA). This includes but is not limited to the anti-bribery and accounting provisions. Under no circumstances shall the Representatives, its employees or sub-candidate(s) offer, provide or receive, directly or through a 3rd party, anything of value to or from a foreign government official with corrupt intent to influence an award or continuation of business or to gain an unfair advantage. The Representative and any sub-candidate(s) must not have false or inaccurate books or records or fail to maintain a system of accurate internal accounting controls. Representative must designate a member of the senior management team of the company/firm to be designated as responsible for FCPA compliance and be accountable for a compliance program. Representative will fully cooperate in any FCPA audits, if requested. Violation of the FCPA will result in immediate termination of the Representative's contract.

### **3 RFQ REQUIRED INFORMATION**

#### **3.1 Your Response To Include**

In order for LED to consider your organization, your response to this RFQ should be no longer than 10 pages in length (if possible), and should include all of the following information:

##### **Company Background, Organization, and Principals**

Provide the firm's organization type (corporation, partnership, proprietorship, etc.); its location address and mailing address; its telephone and fax numbers; e-mail address and website. Indicate whether your firm is international, regional or local. If you will use third parties for any of the services to be provided under this contract, please provide the same information for them as requested for your firm.

Provide a brief description of the firm's background and history, including an organization chart, any parent, affiliated or subsidiary company, and any business partners, including:

- Biographies, work history and proposed responsibilities of all of the firm's principals.
- List of any details that may create a conflict or appearance of a conflict of interest.
- Information about whether, within the last five years, your organization or an officer or principal has been involved in any business litigation or other legal proceedings. If so, please provide an explanation and indicate the current status or disposition.

##### **Experience and Qualifications of Proposed Staffing for the Contract**

Responders should include sufficient information to satisfy evaluators that the organization has the staff with appropriate qualifications, experience and knowledge to perform the "technical assistance" services as described herein.

1) In the response to this RFQ, show the identity of the Project Manager who will be the point of contact for day to day operations; and provide a list of key personnel who will participate in performing the scope of work, and indicate their necessary skills, experience, qualifications and any certifications or awards of the organization or its staff, and the availability of the staff to handle these engagements. The RFQ response should include the education, any certifications or awards and recent experience of key individuals, with particular reference to their ability to handle these services.

2) Include a brief statement of why the organization feels it should be considered for this engagement.

### **Provide A Work Plan**

Provide a work plan describing your proposed approach to and methodology for the project. Include a suggested project work schedule, including tasks and targeted timeline, showing how the organization proposes to meet the targeted timeline for this project.

### **Provide Experience in Successfully Attracting and Locating Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**

- A description of the firm's knowledge and understanding of attracting foreign direct investment, preferable to the United States.
- Evidence of an established network of in-country contacts with major corporations, industry associations, national and local governments, U.S. government, and key leaders in the business community.
- List any business associations to which the candidate belongs and positions held.
- Description of experience coordinating lead-generation events during the past 24 months.
- List of three work-related references with the context for each reference.
- List of the databases/resources used for research. Indicate if these are owned.
- List of economic development agencies currently or previously represented by the firm.

### **Cost Information**

The RFQ response must include an overview of the organization's anticipated costs/charges associated with delivering a proposed program of work for these technical assistance services. Monthly invoices for costs/charges for providing services should reflect all fees and expenses (if expenses have been pre-approved for work outside the scope of the contract) from the previous month being billed, and should be submitted to the OIC Executive Director and his/her fiscal designee. Not more than one invoice per calendar month will be accepted.

All aspects of this RFQ are based on an overall budget LED has for the scope of work and will be in adherence with the EDA grant requirements for reimbursement of such services. An estimated budget, showing your total cost and your anticipated expenses, based on the scope of work your firm will provide in response to this RFQ is required. LED is required to comply with the requirements contained in Title 2, Section 200, of the Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart E of the 2 CFR Part 200 references and discusses relevant cost principles.

### **Additional Requirements**

- Responder must indicate a strong command of English writing and oral skills. LED may request that Responder provide samples of letters and reports written to clients. Confidential client information may be eliminated from these samples.
- Responder's fluency in the language of the host country is required.
- Responder's office must be located in the host country, and staff must reside in the territory of the host country. Indicate the number of years Responder has been located in the market, and explain why the city of its operation is beneficial to the State of Louisiana.
- Responder must demonstrate proficiency in Word processing, database management, research and other computer related skills.



## **4 ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

### **4.1 Selection Process**

All responses received shall be evaluated by a Selection Committee, assisted by technical personnel as deemed appropriate, for the purpose of selecting the Responders with whom a contract may be executed. LED reserves the right to reject all responses in whole or in part if in the judgment of the Selection Committee, the best interests of all parties will be served.

The initial phase of decision making on responses will involve an evaluation of the Responders' technical responses by the Selection Committee using the selection criteria below. The selection of the Responders will be determined by the highest total scores.

The criteria and weight of consideration in making the selections are as follows:

#### **Comprehension of the Project Purpose and Scope of Work: 15 Points**

The firm's response must exhibit an understanding of the project purpose and goals as presented in the RFQ. The evaluation will be based on this understanding, approach, specific tasks, and allocation of time on them. Responding organizations should feel free to suggest other aspects on the scope of work as described in the RFQ for value-added purposes. The degree to which an innovative approach to the requested scope of work proposed beyond the suggested facets that will be accomplished is a positive.

#### **Method of Approach: 25 Points**

The technical completeness of the organization's stated approach to the scope of work, the comprehensiveness of the proposed approach, and the methodology/techniques to be used must be clearly stated. Responses should outline the type of deliverables anticipated over the course of the project.

#### **Capability and Qualifications: 35 Points**

The qualifications, experience, and technical expertise of the organization, project manager, and team members to be assigned to the project as specified in the response, including any third parties, and shall refer to experience and technical quality on similar projects. The organization's professional and project staff that work on the project must be the same staff that is identified in the response.

#### **Work Experience in Louisiana: 15 Points**

The organization's team experience working as a cooperative Louisiana team with relevance to this project is a plus. Provide examples of previous work and how operations benefit the State of Louisiana.

#### **Budget: 10 Points**

LED has a limited budget for each project scope of work, which is a consideration to being considered as a chosen candidate. Per section 3.1 above, regarding cost Information for this RFQ, LED will contact your organization for discussion of your budget based on scope of work to potentially negotiate terms of a contract.

### **4.2 Response Submission Date**

**To be considered by LED, responses to this RFQ must be received by LED not later than 4:00 P.M., CDT, on Friday, May 28, 2021.**

### **4.3 Response to RFQ Coordinator**

The Response, as well as any/all questions regarding the RFQ process must be directed to the LED RFQ Coordinator:

Christina Ocmand, Contract/Grant Reviewer  
Louisiana Economic Development  
Office of the Secretary

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 94185  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9185 USA

Physical Address:  
LaSalle Building, 11th Floor  
617 North 3rd Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802 USA

E-mail: [christina.ocmand@la.gov](mailto:christina.ocmand@la.gov)

### **4.4 RFQ Inquiries**

LED will consider written inquiries and requests for clarification regarding the Scope of Services and other substantive matters relating to this RFQ, submitted by e-mail (and only via e-mail) to the RFQ Coordinator by not later than 4:00 P.M., CDT, on May 14, 2021. Phone calls will not be accepted. Queries and responses will be disseminated to all potential Responders for clarification by LED as soon as reasonably possible.

LED reserves the right to modify the RFQ should a need for change be identified. Requests for e-mail notification of such modifications may be made by e-mail through the RFQ Coordinator.

To be considered by LED, responses to this RFQ must be received by the LED RFQ Coordinator not later than **4:00 P.M., CDT, on Friday, May 28, 2021.**

### **4.5 RFQ Response**

Each response to this RFQ should be prepared simply and economically, avoiding the use of elaborate promotional materials. The costs for developing the response and participating in the selection process is the sole responsibility of the Responder.

Interested parties shall submit the completed response to this RFQ, signed by an authorized representative of the responding firm, via e-mail to the RFQ Coordinator, [christina.ocmand@la.gov](mailto:christina.ocmand@la.gov).

### **4.6 RFQ Response Consideration**

LED reserves the right to reject any and all submitted responses and to request additional information from any and all Responders.

### **4.7 RFQ Award**

LED will notify successful responding organizations. Once LED has reviewed all qualifications and responses, and made a decision on qualified Responders, LED will be in contact to discuss your

response, suggestions, and specific budget categories in a final negotiation for your technical assistance with regard to the scope of work.

#### **4.8 Term of Contract**

The term of any contract resulting from this RFQ is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about July 1, 2021, for a one year term; and LED shall have the option to extend the term by one year, and a second option to again extend the term for an additional one year term.